

A
 SERMON
 Preach'd to the
 SOCIETIES
 FOR

Reformation of MANNERS,

In the CITYS of

London and Westminster.

February, 19. 1699.

Published at their Request.

By THOMAS REYNOLDS.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Richard Mount* at the Postern
 on *Tower Hill.* 1700.



C

To the Right Worshipful

Sir THOMAS ABNEY,

A N D

Sir OWEN BUCKINGHAM

Knights, and Aldermen of the
City of LONDON.

Most Honoured,

I Esteem it a favourable Providence,
that my first appearing thus publick-
ly should be in defence of so Noble a
Cause, as that of Reforming the Man-
ners of Wicked Men, which has over-

The Dedication.

come the reluctance I had to the publishing of this Discourse. And the Post you bear in the Government of this Renowned City, besides the honour of being admitted to your Acquaintance, hath emboldned me to offer it to your Patronage.

The suppressing of Vice and Immorality, which have too long been the Reproach of our Nation, is such a work, as requires the Assistance of all that have any regard to Religion or Virtue : and it is not the least of our Publick Blessings, that so many of your Rank and Quality are ready to lend their helping hand to it.

This is a Design that greatly becomes Persons in your Station, and is truly worthy of Those that bear the highest Character. Your Zeal therefore in promoting it will be your Glory while living, and a considerable comfort to you in the hour of Death.

They

The Dedication.

They who act in a lower Sphere direct their eyes to you for encouragement; and they are such as You that must animate 'em, and make 'em chearful in their work, who otherwise will be apt to faint and be discourag'd.

You are better known than to need the display of Your worthy Characters. And I much rather chuse to be silent than incur the least imputation of Flattery. Yet I hope you'l pardon me that I have declared You the Friends of Virtue, and the Promoters of what is aimed at in the following Sermon, ~~by~~ Dedicating it to You.

I beseech you to accept it as a Testimony of my unfeigned Gratitude for the Favours I have received from you: And espouse what I have endeavour'd to recommend to Persons of all Stations, that You may be reckon'd among our valuable Blessings; and as you
out-

The Dedication.

*outshine others in the Honours of this
World, you may partake of a larger
share in the Glories of the other : which
is the Humble and Hearty Prayer
of,*

GENTLEMEN,

Your most Obligated, and
most Obedient Servant,

Thomas Reynolds.

PROV. ix. 7, 8.

He that reproveth a Scornor, getteth to himself Shame : And he that rebuketh a wicked Man, getteth himself a Blot. Reprove not a Scornor, lest he hate thee-----

HOW improper soever these words at their First view may seem to the present occasion of our Meeting, a little Patience and Attention it's hop'd will beget in you other conceptions about them.

I have not chosen them to become an Advocate for Vice, or to lay Discouragements in their way, who are vigorously bent to suppress it. No, my Brethren, it is so far from my purpose to abate your Zeal, that I would do my uttermost to increase and inflame it. And I heartily pray, that wicked men may be sooner weary of their sins, than you in repro-

B

ving

ving them in all those ways, and by all those Methods that are becoming, proper, and lawful.

And altho my Text may carry a face contrary to what I pretend; yet I promise my self some considerable advantage in drawing an Argument from it, that I presume will be allow'd to have strength in it, both for the justifying your Laudable Proceedings, and encouraging your Perseverance therein.

It is more than probable some may from hence raise an Objection against you; and for this very reason it is necessary these words should be considered and understood, both for your own satisfaction, and the confuting of those who would be glad to lay hold on any thing, whereby to disparage and give a check to that good Work you are engaged in.

If I shew that these words are not directed against your assisting the Civil Magistrate in punishing Profane and Vicious Men, but from what they are really oppos'd unto, they render it your indispensable Duty; may I not hope hereby to wrest out of the hands of your Enemies one of the principal Weapons they

Reformation of Manners.

3

they may use against you, and so do some Service to your Cause?

He that reproveth a Scorners, getteth to himself Shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked Man, getteth himself a Blot. Reprove not a Scorners, lest he hate thee —

And is this all that's to be gotten (may the Objector say) by reproving Scorners and wicked men? Is this all the Recompence to be expected? What wise man then would engage in so fruitless a Service, and bestow his Pains where he is like to meet with so bad a Requital? Were it not better to sit still at home and sleep in a whole Skin, than by *casting Pearls before Swine*, or endeavouring to pull them out of the Mire, to provoke them to turn and rend us? What man will parley with an Enemy, when instead of bringing him to terms of Compliance he is sure before-hand to be torn and cut to pieces by him? Who would venture to reprove wicked men, when they instead of being softened and reclaimed thereby, will but be the more enrag'd, and wound our Innocency while we are striking at their Vices? Common Prudence and Self-preservation

B 2

would

would teach us to forbear in such a Case. But the rather should we do it when Wisdom her self favours us with her Advice, and expressly forbids us to *Reprove a Scorners lest he hate us*, implying that he certainly will do so, and this is all we are like to get from him whatever kind of Intentions we bear towards him.

Now it is of dangerous consequence to draw upon our selves the hatred of wicked men; Men who have no Fear of God before their eyes, who are professed Enemies to all that is Good, who have banish'd their Reason and debauch'd their Conscience, who matter not what they say or do, nor which way their Tongues or their Hands are employ'd so they can but discharge their Malice upon us.

And this being so as Wisdom her self who cannot err assures us, Attempts for reforming the Manners of Scorners and Wicked men would seem a vain and hazardous undertaking: A Work that a Wise man would be shy of, and no man is under any Obligation to engage in, nay under an express Charge to the contrary.

Reformation of Manners.

5

If therefore by meddling in a Matter which doth not belong to them, they receive to themselves no other Recompence of their Pains, than Shame and a Blot, that is, all the Dirt and Calumny that wicked Men can rake together and throw upon them; they must charge it to their own Imprudence, and thank themselves, for if they had taken Wisdom's Advice, they would not have done it.

This Objection hath not (as I know of) been designedly taken notice of by any of my Brethren that have gone before me, yet deserves to be considered as that which not only may be urged by professed Enemies to your worthy Designs, but by those who pretend to be of the wiser, that is, the more wary and cautious sort of Christians.

And indeed this is an Objection they may be very fond of, because it seems to carry some Plausibleness with it, and chiefly because it is an Arrow taken out of your own Quiver; for thus they will pretend to direct your own Weapons against you, and stab your Cause with that very Sword you use in defence of it.

B 3

But

6 A SERMON for the

But this, like an Arrow besides the Mark, does no execution; or rather, like one directed into the Sky, falls down again, and wounds his Head who shot it.

To make this clear and evident, I have propos'd to my self this Method in discoursing upon the words.

First, I shall endeavour to give you the true genuin Sense and Meaning of them.

Secondly, Answer a Query that will naturally result from hence: And this in the

Third and last place will yield me a very fair Opportunity to expose the Weakness and Impertinency of the Objection; and to make it evident, that what Advantage may be had from these words, in the case under consideration, lies on your side, and against your Adversaries.

And, *First* for the Sense of the words, there are three things which deserve our Enquiry: as,

Who is design'd by the *Scorner* and *Wicked Man*?

What is the *Reproof* we are forbidden to minister unto such?

How

Reformation of Manners. 7

How are we to understand the Prohibition when it is said, *Reprove not a Scorner lest he hate thee?*

I. Who is design'd by the *Scorner* and *Wicked Man*? I reply, one and the same Person is understood. For it is agreed on all hands that it's the manner of the Wise Man to repeat the same thing in the same verse in other words throout all this Book. A Scornee is one of the worst of Men: He is a confirmed and hardned Sinner, one who refuses Instruction, and is so incapable of *Reproof*, that nothing will move him to become better: And therefore Wisdom passes such by, and leaves them to their wretched Folly as Persons to be despaired of; while those who being *merely inconsiderate and deluded*, she invites to her House, because such (it were to be hoped) might become willing to receive her Instructions, *ver. 1, 2.* of this Chapter.

Again, the Scornee is one who if reprov'd will but requite you with *Shame* and a *Blot*, that is, will not only make you lose your labour, and thereby give occasion to others to deride the Vanity

of your Attempt, but like an ungrateful Wretch will deride and scoff at you himself, as tho it were not enough to reject your good Offices, but he must abuse you into the bargain.

He is one, who will malign and hate you, and whilst you reprove him, will but throw Dirt in your face, and afterward traduce you behind your back; till he hath made you as black by Slanders and Reports as his Crimes have rendred him *in Reality*.

And are there not many such Scorners in our times? Monsters! shall I say of Men? yea Monsters of Sinners too! most Impious Wretches! who being perfectly hardned in Wickedness, will hearken to nothing that might tend to reform or better them. They are too big to be spoken to, too proud to be instructed, too ungrateful to take any thing kindly at your hands. To endeavour to reform them, is but to give them an occasion to become worse, since Contumelies and Curses, Scorn and Contempt, a Hiss and a Scoff is the Reward you must expect. These are those whom we may well suppose pointed at by St.

Jude,

Reformation of Manners. 9

te. Jude, concerning whom he speaks, that
ou there shall come in the last days Mockers
re- walking after their ungodly Lusts, Sensual,
a- not having the Spirit. ver. 18, 19.

II. What is the Reproof here forbidden?

Reproof is { Verbal
or
Real.

Verbal is the more Gentle way of dealing with Sinners, by speaking to them, and reasoning the Case soberly with them, conveying our Reproofs as wholesome Physick in the Vehicle of soft words and friendly admonitions. An Instance of this we have in the first Chapter of this Book of *Proverbs*, where Wisdom is represented as uttering her words, saying, *How long ye simple ones will ye love Simplicity, &c. Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.* v. 21, 22, 23.

Real Reproof is a rougher way of handling them, and is the last Remedy that is left, which therefore is not to be used till other Methods are found fruitless and ineffectual upon them. This is perform'd by corporal Punishments and
penal

penal Mulcts: And to this those words may refer which you have in the 19th Chapter of this Book; *Judgments are prepared for Scorners, and Stripes for the back of Fools*, ver. 29. And there we are directed to *smite a Scorer, and the Simple will beware*, v. 25. that is, to punish a Derider of Religion severely, which tho it do Him no good, may reclaim Others, or at least make them more cautious and wary.

Now to which sort of Reproofs the Words of my Text do refer, will be very easily determin'd, by any one that duly considers what goes before and follows after. For I must by the way observe, that altho in the Chapters which succeed, there is seldom any Coherence either of the Sense or Sentences, but they lie as so many precious Pearls loose and unstrung; yet here, and in what hath been hitherto delivered of this Book, there is a very plain Connexion, and the Sense like the precious Ore in a rich Mine, runs along in one continued Vein, as an ingenious Author makes the Comparifon.

Reformation of Manners. 11

To any one therefore who considers the Respect the words of the Text have to what precedes and follows, it may appear beyond all doubt that the Reproofs which are here forbidden must be confin'd to those which are managed in a way of Counsel and Advice, Admonition and Entreaty, and all those other Methods of Argument and Persuasion, whereby *Ordinarily* the Ministers of the Word or private Persons would endeavour to reclaim Wicked men from their sins: And that here is nothing in the Text or Context that hath the least shadow of a reference to that sort of Reproof which consists in the punishing Offenders by the Sword of the Civil Magistrate. For in the beginning of this Chap. Wisdom is represented as a glorious Princess dwelling in her Stately Palace, and sending forth her Agents to invite poor simple Souls to her House to hear the Instructions of her Mouth, which will yield as much Pleasure and Satisfaction to the minds of her Scholars, as the most noble Banquet or delicious Feast to their bodily Appetite. And further, the Text stands in a manifest Opposition to *ver.*

19th,

19th, where it is said, *Give Instruction to a wise Man and he will be yet wiser, teach a just Man and he will increase in Learning.* So that upon the whole Context it appears that the words refer only to the Verbal reprovng of Scorners.

III. And lastly, How are we to understand the Prohibition when it is said, *Reprove not a Scorer lest he hate thee?* This may be taken,

either } *Absolutely*
or
} *Comparatively.*

Absolutely, And so we are to let him alone; and as to what respects this way of dealing with him, to leave him wholly to himself.

1. It supposes some former Trials, either by our selves or others, and that there is the fullest Proof of his Obstinacy and Incurribleness. Which being so, we are not to spend any further Time and Pains to no purpose upon him, but pass him by as a desperate Wretch, with whom other kind of Methods must be taken.

2. It

2. It may be taken in a Comparative Sense, which is frequently to be observed in the *Hebrew*, where the Negative Adverb is commonly put for the Particle of Comparison, as *Chap. 8. 10. Receive my Instruction and not Silver*, i. e. rather than Silver. It immediatly follows, *and Knowledg rather than Choice Gold*. So *Joel 2. 5, 13. Rend your Hearts and not your Garments*, i. e. rather rend your Hearts than your Garments. And so may we not accommodate this Hebraism to the words of the Text? *Reprove not a Scornor lest he hate thee, but* (as is immediately subjoin'd) *rebuke a Wise Man and he will love thee*; that is, Reprove not a Scornor, but rather bestow your Reproofs upon those who will receive Good by them, and heartily thank you for them. We should much sooner turn to a wise Man, one that will hear Reason, and think upon what we say, than one where all our Counsels will be rejected. Not but that such Emergences and Circumstances may happen wherein it may be our Duty to reprove the worst of Scornors to testify our Abhorrence of the Sin, even when we cannot

not better the Man. But usually and for the most part we should apply our selves to those who will hear us, where there is the greatest likelihood of doing Good, with the least Damage at the same time to our selves. And so the words teach us to make a wise and discreet Choice of the Persons we would admonish, and not heedlessly to expose our selves to the Contempt and Obloquy of scornful men: But when all Circumstances considered there is the greatest Reason to believe that we shall neither do Good to the Person we reprove, nor to Others, nor bring any Glory to God, but only draw down an Inconvenience upon our selves, in such a Case we are to forbear our Reproofs.

And thus it most commonly happens with reference to the openly Profane and Wicked. Such generally do but make a mock of Sin, and deride every thing that carries the face of Seriousness with it. To tell such of their Sins, does but exasperate them the more; to check them in their Career, is to make them fly out with the greater Violence; and to offer to controul them, is to inflame their

their Wrath, and increase their Hatred against us.

Here then it is fitting we should desist and hold our Hands, because when we can do no Good we ought not to administer an Occasion of further Evil; and since we cannot suppress Mens Wickedness, we should not do any thing that might provoke it: Herein acting consonantly to those words of our Blessed Lord, who thought fit to advise us *not to give that which is Holy unto Dogs, nor to cast our Pearls before Swine, lest they trample them under their Feet, and turn again and rend us*, Matth. 7. 6.

But yet, as I have already observ'd, this is not so absolute a Rule, but may upon some extraordinary Emergency admit of an Exception: And it may so fall out that we shall find our selves under an Obligation to speak up boldly for the Glory of God, tho we despair at the same time of any Good to the Sinner. Yea By-standers by considering our Place, Profession and Character, may expect something from us: And to avoid being accus'd of Connivance or Cowardice, we may find our selves bound to take
some

some notice of Scorers: tho to speak properly, I think this is not so much a reproving of them, as a clearing of our selves.

When this is to be done, and How, and what are those Circumstances that must determine us, as I have not time, so neither do I judg it fit for me to assign. This must be left to a Man's own Conscience and Prudence; and it being a very nice and critical Point, he hath the more Reason to look up to God for his Assistance and Direction: But setting aside some rare and special Emergences, the Instruction the words afford us is to be the Rule of our Conduct towards Scorers and Wicked Men. And this leads me to a Query which doth Naturally result from hence, which is the

Second thing propos'd, in answering of which I shall not only remove the Objection that hath been started, but make it undeniably appear, that because we are forbidden to reprove a Scorer in the plain Sense of our words, for that very Reason we are indispensibly bound to reprove him in the Sense that our Adversaries oppose.

The

Reformation of Manners.

17

The Query then is this, If we are expressly forbidden to reprove Scorners and wicked Men in a way of Counsel, Advice, Admonition, and the like; pray what must be done, or what other course must be taken with them? In answering of this Inquiry, I shall undertake to evince these two things.

I. That they must not absolutely be let alone, that is, be left to pursue their hellish Courses with that full Swinge and Liberty, as to be entirely without all manner of Controul. But,

II. That the supreme Governour of all things, in his great Wisdom and Mercy to the World, hath appointed other Methods of dealing with such irreprovable Sinners.

I. That they must not absolutely be let alone so to pursue their hellish Courses, as to be without all manner of Controul. The Reasons of this are so strong and obvious, and the Absurdities of the contrary supposition so gross and palpable, that there are none who do not wilfully
C shut

shut their Eyes, but must readily assent to the truth of it. And as for Scorers themselves, if we could as easily turn their Wills, as convince their Understandings of this, we should not only presently put to silence all their Objections, but save them from those Severities which otherwise they must shortly fall under, and it may be before they are aware.

But to speak somewhat to this, there needs no more to prove it than to suppose the contrary: Suppose that Scorers were to be wholly uncontroul'd, to live as they please, and do what they list. The Consequences of this will appear to be such, as must render it absolutely necessary for the Honour of God, the Defence of Religion, the maintaining common Order, and the Peace and Welfare of Humane Societies, that some Course be taken at least to restrain and curb them.

For if no notice were to be taken of them; if men of prophane and atheistical Principles, of unbridled Lusts and Passions, haters of all that is Good, and open deriders of God and Godliness, were to be let alone to follow the depraved
Byas

Byas of their wicked Hearts, to what a pass must the World be reduc'd in a little time?

The Vices of Men would not only grow up to an Excess of Boldness and Insolence, but the Infection would spread like a raging Pestilence, or like a devouring Fire, which tho at first it break out but in one House, and might have been easily quench'd, yet being let alone proceeds farther till it hath turn'd the whole City into a ruinous Heap.

Sinners would hearten one another up and take Courage, others would be more easily induc'd to fall in with them. Their Zeal for Licentiousness (O that we were as zealous against it!) would make them indefatigable in using all imaginable Methods to strengthen their Party, and increase the Number of their Profelytes. And if *now*, after all the Endeavours the Reforming Societies have us'd to discourage them, they swarm in such Numbers among us, how would they then overspread the Face of the whole Earth, and like a general Deluge drown all Mankind first in Sin, and then in Perdition?

If Men might be suffer'd not only to revile Religion, but openly to renounce Calling upon God, to prophane his Sabbath, to Curse and Swear, to Blaspheeme his Holy Name, to commit all the Outrages against Heaven they are capable of, and to be guilty of all manner of Immoralities: What would become of Religion, the Worship of God, and all that Honour we owe to him, and should be so tender of?

If Men might pursue their inordinate and beastly Lusts without Interruption, who would be safe either in the Streets or in their Houses? And as we might suppose the Number of the Good at such a time to be very small; so how would they be as so many *Lots* in the midst of *Sodom*, who had it not been for a wonderful Interposition of God, could not have kept himself from the violence of those filthy Wretches, tho in his own House. *Gen. 19. 11.*

In a word, If wicked Men were to pass on wholly uncontroul'd, there would be in a little time no Temperance, no Sobriety, no Chastity, no Truth, no Faith, no Justice, no common Honesty:

But

But Beastliness and Sensuality, Leudness and Debauchery, Injustice and all kind of Immorality would take place of Religion, and banish all Virtue out of the World. The bands of all humane Society would be broken; and as Men would daily grow worse and worse, so they would not only bring ruin upon others, but sudden destruction upon themselves: not only as such extravagant Wickedness would hasten down the Judgments of God, as it did upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; but as there would need no more utterly to destroy them than their own inordinate Lusts and outrageous Passions.

And these being now the most certain, natural and necessary Consequences of mens unrestrained Vices and Corruptions (as none will deny) it does then most unquestionably follow, that they must not be thus let alone, but that some course or other must be taken to repel and rebuke, to conquer or at least to curb and put a stop to their prevailing wickedness, without which Religion and the honour of God would soon fall to the ground, and all the bands of common Order and Government be

22 *A SERMON for the*

broken and torn to pieces. So that the World could not long subsist if Vice were wholly without a check, but would of necessity soon perish by its own wickedness. And therefore,

II. The supreme Governour of all things, in his great Wisdom and Mercy to the World, to prevent its speedy and hasty ruin, hath appointed other ways and methods of dealing with scornful and incorrigible Sinners, who will not be reclaimed by mild and gentle Reproofs. He hath appointed that which shall have more force upon them, than the strongest Reasons in the world. They shall be constrain'd to do that which they cannot be perswaded to ; they shall be forc'd and driven to it even against their wills. When fair Words and Intreaties, sober Admonitions, and friendly Advice will not prevail upon them, but they persist to sin openly in the face of the Sun, to the scandal of Religion, the contempt of the Laws, and the dishonour of God ; they are to find, that tho God may have seal'd up our Mouths, he hath not wholly ty'd up our Hands: And we must
make

make them do that by outward force and compulsion, which they will not do by entreaty and persuation. The stripes and corrections of the Rod, and other mulcts and punishments, must supply the defects of the Word: And the Magistrate must compel them to that, which Ministers and other good People cannot by softer Methods obtain from them.

Therefore for this end God hath invested the Civil Magistrate with power to restrain and punish such daring Offenders. He is said to be *the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*, Rom. 13. 4. And in another place is said *to be sent of God for a Punishment of evil doers*, 1 Pet. 2. 14. He hath his Authority from hence (as tho he were sent down from thence to take cognizance of insolent Rebels) and it is God who smites, tho by the hands of men.

And as it is the indispensible Duty of the Magistrate to employ his power for God, in punishing the bold Impieties of these men: As he is not *to bear the Sword in vain*, but to use it in suppressing their

Vices and reforming their Manners, as well as for other ends and purposes; so it is no less the Duty of every one in his private Station and Capacity to be assisting to the Magistrate in subserviency hereunto; by discovering Offenders, and bringing them to Justice, by taking notice of those who break the Laws, and proceeding against them in order to legal Conviction, that so they may be justly punished; such as Blasphemers, Sabbath-breakers, Drunkards, Whoremongers, and the like prophane and beastly Sinners; such as deride and scoff at Religion, who make a mock of Sin, and glory in their shame, who hate the Reproofs of the Mouth, and despise all manner of Instruction.

These are the Scorers in my Text, and for these the Laws are made; these are the proper Objects of punishment; Stripes are prepared for the backs of such Fools as these. The Sword is put into the hand of the Magistrate on purpose to be exercised upon these men, because by no other means or methods is there any hope of bringing them to terms. And therefore tho we are forbidden to reprove
 * such,

such, yet we are not absolutely to let them alone, or to suffer them to go uncontroll'd in their wickedness; but to apply ourselves to those other Methods of dealing with them, which God hath appointed, that so hereby they may be brought to some amendment: and if they cannot be reform'd in their Principles, they may in their Manners; and altho there were no hope of bettering them, there might be somewhat done to prevent their hurting of others: as rude and savage Beasts, which (tho you cannot change their Nature) may be chained up from doing further Mischief.

And our assisting the Magistrate to this end, is what we are all of us in our several Stations and Capacities obliged to both as Men and as Christians. To this we are indispensibly bound, as we tender the Honour and Glory of God, the good of the Society of which we are parts, the Welfare of our Families, the Authority of the Magistrate; as we would not partake of other Mens sins, nor be guilty of their Blood; and as we would put a stop to the spreading of Iniquity, and avert the heavy judgments of God,

God, or procure those farther desirable Blessings we may need. And this being so, then in the

Third and last place, how fair an opportunity doth this give me, and what Scope does it afford to expose the weakness and impertinency of the Objection, which your Adversaries might pretend to raise from these words to discourage your noble Undertakings? How evident doth it now appear, that your Opposers are so far from gaining an advantage against you from hence, that on the contrary whoever should offer to urge these words, would not only be presently put to shame and silence, but have the weapon whereby he thought to stab your Cause sheath'd in his own Bowels? I mean, his own Argument would be turned into one of the strongest Arguments against him.

How little pretence have any to argue from these words against your assisting the Civil Magistrate in punishing of leud and notorious Sinners? It is true, we are not to use verbal Reproofs to a Scornor, we are not ordinarily to spend our Breath upon so vile and impious a wretch, we
are

are not to admonish and counsel him ; but are to forbear using any further Arguments and Persuasions with him. And what then ? must the Magistrate therefore not have any concern with him ? or we not yield our assistance to the Magistrate ? whence do they infer this ? where is the *Nexus* ?

But how convincing and clear is the reasoning on the other side ? Because we are not to minister verbal Reproof to the Scorners , and yet his wickednesses are such as upon no account to be tolerated ; therefore and for that very reason we are to join with the Civil Magistrate in doing our utmost to suppress their Abominations : for which very end the Sword is delivered from God into his hands , that so they who will not be brought into order by methods of Reason, may be compel'd and forc'd into it by mulcts and bodily punishments. The reasoning here is close and pertinent , so clear and natural , and so strictly cemented and united, that all the malice of wicked men, and the subtilty of all the Devils in Hell will never be able to break the force of it.

But

But yet after all we have said, I am apprehensive our Adversaries may resume the Objection, and proceed to reply: We will acknowledg it is probable, they may say, that the Text may be wholly confin'd to the verbal reprov'g of Scorners, and so far it must be granted that our Objection is not pertinent or valid. But notwithstanding, the reason on which the Prohibition in the Text is founded, is applicable to your case, and if it holds true and hath force in the one, why may it not in the other?

Now is it not plain that in the method you take of reprov'g Scorners and wicked men by the power of the Civil Magistrate, you incur their hatred and malice? In your way of dealing with Sinners don't you make good the words, in getting to your selves *Shame and a Blot*? doth not your own daily Experience confirm and verify it? do not the many Sermons that have been preach'd and printed acknowledg it? a good part of which is taken up in solacing you against the Calumnies and Reproaches of Scorners. And if here, in the sense given of the Text, you are not to re-
prove

prove a Scornee lest he hate you, and not to rebuke him lest you get to your selves Shame and a Blot, why should you not then for the same reason be forbidden to reprove him by the Civil Magistrate?

I shall give as short an Answer to this as I can, tho many things might be said unto it.

It is falsely suggested that we are forbidden to reprove a Scornee merely or solely upon the account of shame and hatred. For I have shewn you, that when by verbal reproving a Scornee there is nothing else to be got but shame and reproach, no good end or purpose can be serv'd that might ballance the present evil we sustain by administering our Reproofs: that is, there is no good to be done to the Person we reprove, nor to others, neither any Glory to be brought to God; there is nothing redounds from our pains but a reproach to our selves, and a further exasperating of the wicked wretch: In such a case, we are to desist and forbear our reproofs. But if any of those great and noble Ends I have mentioned might be obtained; if by exposing our selves to shame we might
bring

bring glory to God, or do any good, these are such valuable ends, that we should not only be willing to sacrifice our Reputation, but all we had for the sake of them.

And this now is the case with reference to our assisting of the Civil Magistrate, which makes it vastly different from that in my Text. For by bringing Offenders to punishment, tho we incur the reproaches and malice of wicked men, yet we do thereby answer such good ends and purposes as do infinitely outweigh the particular loss or evil we may sustain in the faithful discharge of our Duty. For to instance hereby,

1st. Sometime a great deal of good is done to the person we reprove, he is reclaimed and reformed, or prevented from growing worse.

2^{dly}. A great deal of good is done to others, they are warned and admonished thereby.

3^{dly}. A great deal of evil is prevented that might result from mens uncontrouled Impieties. And,

Lastly, a great deal of glory is brought to God, as Religion is defended, God's Honour is maintained, his Name is revered,

renced, the Authority of the Magistrate is upheld, and Order and Government is kept up in the world: *Each one* of which ends, if but one might be attained, is *so valuable*, and *all* put together so unspeakably advantageous, and such a general good, that no man ought, nay no good man (that duly considers it) can be unwilling to sacrifice his Name and Reputation, nay to venture his Life for the attaining of them.

And if in our Endeavours hereunto we get to *our selves* shame and a reproach, we might use the Scripture expression, and say, if this is to be *vile*, *we will yet be more vile*, 2 Sam. 6. 12. Let them call me Informer, Busy-body, and a thousand worse names, I'll matter them not. Let them heap up all the Dirt they can upon me, I will still pursue these great ends. Much more might be said towards the silencing of this part of the Objection; but this I judg to be sufficient.

Having thus consider'd and opened the Text, clear'd the Sense, and removed the Difficulties which might seem to attend it, and brought them to serve you
Purposer

Purposes instead of making against them, I now proceed to the Applicatory part of my Discourse. And,

I. By way of *Instruction* in the following Reflections: as here we may take notice,

1. Of the precipitancy and imprudent rashness of some well meaning People, who will plentifully bestow their Exhortations and good Counsels where they might reasonably expect not only to be rudely treated themselves, but that Religion also should suffer upon their account. They fall to the reprovng of Sin wherever they meet it, without any consideration had of the Person that commits it; and so for want of observing the rule of my Text, have done disservice to Religion, and gain'd no credit to themselves. *It is good to be zealously affected in a good thing* (as some of you have heard in a worthy Discourse from those words of the Apostle) but then our Zeal should be temper'd with Discretion. It is, I must confess, a most rare and commendable Virtue, yet thro an imprudent misplacing of it may issue in very
bad

Reformation of Manners. 33

bad effects. But the Instances of those whose zeal doth transport them beyond their knowledg in this particular are *so few*; and of such whose zeal doth not keep pace with it, *so many*, that I think it not needful to enlarge.

2. We may observe the adorable goodness of God, in prescribing this rule for our conduct toward Scorners and Wicked men. Such is his regard to our peace and quiet, to our good Name and Reputation, that he would not have us employ our pains where we may not reap the pleasant Fruits of our labour, nor expose our reputation where there is not a prospect of bringing more Glory to him by our reproofs, than shame to our selves. Which one consideration should methinks be an irresistible motive to induce us cheerfully to comply with the Duty of reproofing, since we are only oblig'd to it, when the accruing Benefit and Reward will unspeakably counter-vail all the Trouble, Hazard, and Difficulty which may attend the performance of it.

3. The words do also lead us to observe the most deplorable condition of

D

Scorners

Scorners and Wicked men; how unconceivably sad their case must be, in being thus left of God, and all good men, in being deprived, nay in depriving themselves of one of the greatest Blessings under Heaven. For what a Blessing is it to have a faithful Friend, who will admonish us of our faults, that so Iniquity may not prove our ruin?

To be deprived of this is to be deprived of one of the greatest mercies, and of a most futable and likely means of our Salvation: yet this you see is the sad case of those who deride Religion. For not only *Solomon*, but a greater than *Solomon*, our Saviour Christ himself, hath forbidden us to misplace reproofs upon those who are desperate.

4. The whole Tenour and Strain of what hath been delivered, doth not only evince the necessity of Civil Magistracy and Government, in order to lay a restraint upon the Corruptions, and reforming the Manners of those men in whom no Counsels or verbal Reproofs will produce the desired effect: But shews us also, how great and publick a mercy it is to enjoy such Magistrates as will righteously execute

execute the Laws upon these Offenders, and who, if there be any that will convict them, will take care that they receive such punishments as their crimes deserve. Such Magistrates are publick blessings indeed, and as they are *sent of God*, are the Instances of his good will to Mankind.

Vice runs every thing into disorder and confusion: whatever therefore restrains and keeps this from breaking forth, ought to be acknowledged as a great blessing, as it is a binding up mens hands, to prevent their destroying themselves, and hurting others.

And this again makes it evident that Magistracy is from God, that it is not from the evil Spirit, who as he at first lost his own happiness, by stepping out of his proper place and rank, would by introducing the same disorder ruin the World, and destroy Mankind by the same methods whereby he undid himself. *The powers that be, are ordain'd of God*, Rom. 13. 1. And the Magistrate, as I have before observ'd, is *sent of God*; that is, tho not the Man, yet the Office and the Power comes down from Hea-

ven, and this in infinite mercy to a sinful World, which hath not so much as a Principle left for its common preservation, but if abandon'd to its own Inclinations would hurry into ruin.

5. And this farther informs us of the honour of the Civil Magistrate, and what regards we are to bear to him, even no less than to God's Vice-gerent, and the Guardian of our Laws: which should strike us with awe, and direct us to carry it towards him with the highest Respect and Reverence. Such are said to be the *Gods of the Earth*, Gods in Power, as they should be also in other Godlike Excellencies. How high a Post, how honourable a Station then are they set in! But which certainly is then most honourable, when they are most serviceable, and do most thoroughly pursue and answer the ends of their appointment. And this again,

6. Instructs those in their duty who have any concern or influence in the choice either of such persons as are to concur in enacting Laws for us, or of such whose place it is to see them executed. It is most plain from all that hath been

Reformation of Manners. 37

been hitherto said, that we are not to be directed merely by a great Estate, or by regard to a Party, or bias'd by Relation, Affection, Dependance, private Interest, and such like mean selfish and mercenary Motives: But we are to take our measures from the nature and ends of Government; and therefore laying aside all particular and by respects, and having nothing but the glory of God and the good of the Community in our eye, we should make choice of such Magistrates as will diligently take care and see that the good Laws we have be duly and impartially executed, men (as the Holy Scripture describes them) *fearing God and hating Covetousness*, who are no Respecters of Persons; who will not be warp'd by bribery, fear, or private regards; Men of real Integrity and Probity, men of Fidelity, Justice, Courage and Boldness; who will not fear the face of Man in the cause of God; who when Offenders are convicted, will be sure to punish them. Where such are to be found is not my place to direct, but yours to enquire.

38 A SERMON for the

And then again, having chosen such Magistrates, it is our duty to obey them, and in our several stations and capacities to yield them all the assistance we can, and not to render them, so far as in us lies, only great Cyphers in their Office thro the want of our help; but that Iniquity being found out, it may be brought under the correction of Justice. As you can do nothing without the Authority of the Magistrate, so neither will he be able to do much without your help and assistance. You are to be as Eyes to him in bringing criminal matters under his cognizance, and he to be as Hands to you in correcting and punishing them.

Now as a motive to urge and enforce all this upon you, I would desire you only to consider that the obtaining of such choice blessings, as good Representatives, faithful Magistrates, and subservient Officers, lies much in your own power. For you (my Brethren) enjoy this unspeakable Privilege above many Nations, viz. the right (in many cases) of choosing these persons.

If at any time therefore it should happen (which God forbid) that there

should be any effectual Laws wanting for the suppressing of Vice and Prophaneness; or, supposing good Laws, there should not be a sufficient Magistracy of those (who come under your choice) to put them in execution; or if on the contrary, Iniquity should be established by a Law, or publicly connived at, much of all this would be owing to your selves, for that by your care and diligence at first you might (in a great degree however) have prevented it. The miseries which must ensue from such a posture of affairs might be look'd upon as a just punishment of your negligence, and it would then be in vain to cry out or complain of the slackness of the Laws and badness of the times; for why did you not use the means that were once in your own power to guard against these evils? Thus much by way of Instruction. To proceed:

II. What I have endeavour'd to prove in the foregoing Discourse, does afford abundant matter for the *justifying* your noble and generous undertaking of suppressing the Vices and reforming the

Manners of Wicked men. This is your duty, and the sense of duty should bear you up under the greatest censures and reproaches. Besides whatever you may incur of this nature, yet by doing your duty you will answer (as I have shewn you) such great ends and purposes, as will make amends for all your trouble and hazard in the performance of it. Let men go on to condemn you, you may be sure God will justify you; and is it not unspeakably better to be censured of men for doing your duty, than to be condemned of God for the neglect of it?

But why should any condemn you? If a man's house were infected with the Plague, will any body blame you for shutting up his Doors? If those very Persons who exclaim so much against you should have their Houses on fire, would they reproach and revile you for endeavouring to quench the Flames? And if a worse Pestilence and Fire be broken out, if men grow rampant in Wickedness, and run up and down spreading the contagion, as tho Hell were broke loose, must you be blam'd for endeavouring to put a stop to it?

*

Will

Will Men thank you for lending a helping hand to save them from temporal evils and dangers? and shall they reproach you for labouring to deliver them from eternal ruin? It will put a man to great pain to have his Leg or Arm cut off, yet he will not blame the Chirurgion, when it is to save his life; and must you be blam'd for punishing a Sinner to save his Soul? O ungrateful creatures, that will thus requite your kindness to them!

But let us consider a little; If you are to be blam'd, it is either because,

The Matter you are engaged in is unlawful in it self.

Or it does not concern you.

Or the Methods you take in the prosecution of it are unjustifiable.

As for the Matter and Work it self, my whole Discourse hath been a full and clear Justification of it.

To say it do's not concern you, is very absurd and foolish. What! does it not concern you to vindicate the honour of God? to bring Glory to his Name, the thing you were made for? Does it not concern you to avert the Wrath and Judgments of God from the Land, and
to

to preserve your selves, your Families, and the Nation from ruin? What doth concern you if this doth not?

To say your Methods are unjustifiable, this is what I presume they can never prove after they have made those allowances, which in a matter of such publick nature and extent all mankind must own to be reasonable and just.

As for your entring into Combinations and Societies: They cannot reproach you for this, when they consider the Order and Regularity of them. This hath been already sufficiently justified by another hand; and (as that Reverend Person expresses it) 'tis no other thing than what is constantly done without offence in cases of *Secular* concernment. Besides, can Wicked men think it no offence to combine and club together, to carry on the designs of Hell in debauching and damning one another? And shall not we associate and combine together to prevent their ruin, if it be possible?

As for the Rules and Orders that are observed among you; do not very competent Judges highly approve them? and if any condemn them, are they not for the
most

most part such as betray a very apparent malice or ignorance?

The only thing that seems to carry an ill face with it, yet will be found highly commendable, is *the business of Informing.*

It is true, as it was manag'd in the late times, it was one of the most odious and disgraceful things in the world, when a parcel of sorry, idle and profligate Fellows, the scum of the Earth, to get a piece of Money to supply their necessities, or to spend upon their Lusts, would inform against those who were forc'd into Corners, and there met together not to plot against the Government, but only to worship God according to their Consciences. This was such an employment, that none but a generation of Vipers would be engaged in. And indeed there is nothing in my opinion can render a man more infamous and odious than to be such a kind of Informer. But to inform against the Vices and evil Manners of Wicked men; to inform against Cursing and Swearing, Blaspheming and Sabbath-breaking, Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wantonness,

tonness, and other such hellish and brutal Practices, what reproach can there be in this? This is what the greatest and best of men have not disdained or refused, as you have had divers instances given you by others out of the Scriptures.

But I only ask, Is the Law or the Execution of it to be reproach'd? why then should Informing in order to execution? To have a Law that shall never be executed, is all one as to have no Law. And how shall the Law be executed if there be none to inform, and to convict Offenders in order to the bringing them to punishment? And where lies the dishonour of doing our duty in this particular? This is so far from being a disgrace to any man, that I must say, it is the most honourable part of your whole work, as it discovers a brave and noble Spirit, that is not afraid to appear for God against the worst of men. Those who are most forward in this work, are most to be commended; as those we reckon the best Soldiers, who will stand in the Front of the Battle, and engage in the hottest service.

But

But to conclude, as it is every one's duty to see the Laws executed, so it may in divers circumstances be every mans duty to inform. And he is to be accounted little better than a Coward, who will not engage in this piece of Christian Service when fairly call'd to it.

What I have said therefore under this Head may be sufficient to vindicate your Proceedings. And if there be any who will still continue to rail and calumniate, it is to be suspected they generally are very bad men and of no reputation. And then you need value their reproaches no more than the fleerings of Fools and Idiots, or the loud clamour and bawling of mad Men. But having shewn how much there is to justify you of the Societies for Reformation of Manners, I pass in the

III. Place to a Use of Reproof to those who most justly deserve it. And.

I. As for those who are open Enemies to Reformation, and are the Persons you are to deal with, I shall not speak to them; they are the Scorers in my Text, and therefore to be suppos'd very seldom present

46 *A S E R M O N for the*

present at these places, and upon these occasions: And if I should address myself to them, it would be to no purpose, and I have too little time to spend my Breath in vain. Therefore leaving them wholly to your Management, I pass them by to speak

2. To another sort of Persons, of whom there is more hope, and they are those who pretend to Religion as well as you, and are men of some Principles and Sobriety, who notwithstanding have been too ready to condemn and cast Reflections upon you.

That Prophane and Wicked men should oppose a Reformation of Manners, is not to be wondred at; the Reasons are plain and obvious, none can be ignorant of them: but that any who pretend to Religion or Sobriety, who are not openly vicious themselves, that they should discourage your good undertakings, and concur to raise Objections against them, this is what ought to be deeply lamented by us. Their Reasons must lye more secret and remote, yet I presume it not difficult to guess at them. For what can they spring from but a narrow,

narrow, contracted and selfish Principle, from the want of a generous and publick Spirit, and that noble Zeal and Courage wherewith you appear to be inspired for the cause of God?

This indeed they blame in you as imprudent rashness and forwardness, a meddling with matters beyond your Sphere, and a needless disturbing of your Neighbour. But to speak plainly, I fear (without breach of Charity) that this is a subtile Artifice only to salve their own Reputation by wounding of yours. And therefore they are so liberal in bestowing their Censures upon you, that they might escape those which otherwise must fall heavy upon their own Heads: As it usually happens that they who are first in the complaint are most in the fault.

3. Those also I think worthy to be condemned, who tho they will *speake* nothing against you, will *act* nothing for you. The work of Reformation may sink or swim for them, they mind and matter it not, and are not at all concerned about it. Now these persons are to be reprov'd for the neglect of their duty upon a double account.

1. For

I. For not assisting in their own Persons. In such a Cause as this, wherein the common Interest of Religion, and the good of our Country is so much concerned : Every one should appear and shew himself as there is fit occasion. In case of an open Invasion every one is ready to take Arms, and make head against the common Enemy, to defend their Estates and Liberties. And shall the more valuable concerns of Religion and our Souls, which are of infinitely greater Consequence, be invaded ; and shall any man, can any man be so miserably stupid and sluggish, so very cowardly and timorous, as either to sit still and do nothing, or keep out of sight and run away from the Conflict ?

Yet this I fear is the case of many, especially of those who when an opportunity offers for their being singularly useful in an Office, slip away and decline it, whereby a worse man comes in, or at least hire another to supply it ; who indeed will stand in the place, but take little care to discharge the duties of the office ; they will carry the Staff, but earn their Money as easily as they can.

There

There is little to be expected from a great many who only serve in an Office for gain. Such will not ordinarily put themselves to much pains, or expose themselves to notable hazards and difficulties. And may it not be fear'd that the same motive that induc'd to accept of the Office, may as easily corrupt them in it, so that they shall have no strength to hold a great Offender when a piece of Money is dropt into their hands? What I have suggested under this Head is one principal reason why a Reformation of Manners is not more vigorously prosecuted, and which I have heard very much complained of; and therefore beseech you to consider it, and not let so good a Cause fall to the ground for want of putting your shoulder to the burden. And,

2. Such are to be reprov'd not only for their unwillingness to assist in Person, but also for their backwardness in contributing to the Charge. And this indeed is an offence of a higher nature, because it is so reasonable, and at the same time so very easie, that methinks they should not in modesty refuse it. This puts them to no trouble, and besides

E

might

might be manag'd with that secrecy if they thought fit, that there would be no need to fear incurring the displeasure of any man thereby. If they had a Cause of their own to be pleaded, they would not starve it for want of seeing the Counsel. But if the Cause of God is to be pleaded, tho they are rich and abound, they will not spare a Farthing; and yet their Assistance in this particular is greatly needed, and is a further Obstruction to the Course of Justice. There are few such generous Lawyers to be found who will plead in order to the conviction of a wretched Sinner, without their Fee; and indeed it is their livelihood, and therefore they may justly expect to be rewarded for it. And this is another matter I would recommend to consideration, and beseech those that will not assist to this good work in Person, to contribute however towards the charge.

Indeed I must speak it to the praise of the People of *London*, that they have upon all occasions appear'd very ready to afford a bountiful assistance to the preaching of the Gospel which is design'd

sign'd to make men good. I wish they would be as free and generous in furthering of what is designed for the restraining and punishing of the bad: I hope they will. But with reference to those who will yield no Help or Assistance in either of these respects, neither in their Persons nor with their Money; how great supineness doth it argue in them! and the slender regard they have to the glory of God, or the good of their Country! And how just might it be for God severely to animadvert upon them. And since they would do nothing for the stopping the Plague of wickedness among us, their Families should be first in the Infection, their Sin punish'd in the rebellion and degeneracy of their Children; and when Judgments shall come upon the Land, they should feel the first and smartest strokes of them.

3. Those are to be censur'd and reprov'd, who being in places of Power and Authority, are unfaithful in their Office, not only as they connive at Vice in not punishing it, but encourage it by their own Example, and browbeat and discounte-

nance such as inform against Offenders that they might be brought to Justice. How sad is the case, when they that should be a *Terror to Evildoers* shall become the patrons of Vice; who instead of discouraging Prophaneness and Immorality shall lead men on to it, and rather than use the Sword for the punishing of Sinners, shall reach forth a shield to defend them.

It is a Crime which we condemn and abhor, when one in a private station is found unfaithful to his Trust, tho it is in a thing comparatively trivial; how much more in the Post of a Magistrate, and in a matter wherein the good of the Publick is concern'd, where his Fidelity is too engag'd, not only in point of Honour, but under the sacred Tie of an Oath, the breach of which does render him both perfidious and perjur'd?

An evil Magistracy has been reckon'd of such fatal consequence to the Publick in antient Governments, that they took all imaginable care whom they chose into such a Post; and if any prov'd unfaithful, they thought no Punishment severe enough

Reformation of Manners. 53

nough for them. We may read of those who have been flead, and the Seats of Justice cover'd with their skins, as a Mark of perpetual Infamy, and for a Terror to them who should succeed in their places.

And tho we have no such frightful usages among us, yet the belief of a God, and that Magistracy is his Ordinance, that persons in places of Power do act under him as his Deputies and Delegates, and that they must give a strict account another day of their trust, as well as other men; when the guilt of all those Abominations which it was their duty to have restrain'd and punish'd shall be laid at their door: All these things, I say, put together, would furnish them with such considerations as are enough, one would think, to awaken the most senseless and stupid; and make a man either afraid to take upon him the Office of a Magistrate, or to resolve to execute it with the greatest Faithfulness and Diligence. I pass to the

IV. And last use of Exhortation, wherewith I shall conclude. And,

34 A SERMON for the

I. As to what more especially respects your selves, who are of the Societies for Reformation; my Exhortation to you is, that watching strictly over your own Lives (which should be very exact and exemplary) you would continue to encourage and *provoke one another to this good Work.* Be not balk'd by any difficulties, discouragements, or oppositions you meet with, but consider your great Lord and Master, *who bore such contradiction of Sinners, lest you grow weary and faint in your minds.* Preserve the sweet Harmony and Affection that hath hitherto obtain'd among you, and increase the good Opinion you have of each other, so that the Devil and his Emisfaries by all the stratagems they shall use may not be able to divide and weaken you. Go on to convince the World, that whatever particular Sentiments you may have about lesser doubtful matters of Religion, yet in the most substantial, plain and necessary things you heartily agree, and can as heartily concur to promote them; appearing herein for the cause of Religion as the antient *Romans* for their Commonwealth, with whom

it was a generous principle to sacrifice their private piques and quarrels to the publick good. And did we all employ our Zeal more this way, it would be found one of the most effectual means to put an end to those Heats and Animosities that have been so much lamented by sober Men of all Parties.

I shall offer but one thing more, and it is, that you would yield all the assistance to each other you can, by your often meeting together to consult and advise about the most proper methods to prosecute what you have undertaken. And might it not be of some further use in promoting this great design of Reformation, if (as I understand there are divers Societies, some consisting of Persons of inferior, and others of a higher Rank) those of the latter sort would favour the other more frequently with their presence, which will very much animate and encourage them? like Soldiers who are observ'd never to fight so courageously, as when their general Officers appear at the head of them. But this I propose with submission.

2. As to those you would reform : It is not needful that I exhort you to what others have so largely insisted upon already, and which I believe you are careful to observe. It may suffice that I only hint to you, that you would make the Word of God your guide in this important affair: And therefore bearing no Wrath, Malice, Revenge, &c. against any man in your hearts, but strictly observing the Rules of Charity and Mercy, you would see that with meekness and compassion, and yet with great impartiality and prudence, you endeavour to reclaim wicked Men from their Sins. And,

1st. By Verbal Reproof, if by this there is any likelihood of prevailing upon them; not proceeding to rougher methods when milder ones may do, nor hastily passing those by as incorrigible Sinners who may not be so: but having found upon sufficient trial, or being well assur'd upon other grounds, there is no good to be done this way; then

2^{dly}. Apply your selves to that which God in cases of extremity hath appointed. If they are really Scorners, deal with them as such: and to stir you up to

the vigorous prosecution of the Laws against these hardned and obstinate Offenders, I shall offer a few things to your consideration : As,

1st. That tho the foregoing Discourse should not fully convince you of your duty herein, yet your own enlightned Consciences cannot but prompt you to it, and tell you that God expects it from you. Here you do not run before you are sent, nor answer before you are call'd. May those words therefore be always fresh in your Memory, *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thine Heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him*, Levit. 19. 17. Implying that not to rebuke him is to hate him, to be accessary to his Damnation, and guilty of his Blood.

2^{dly}. It is your honour and glory to be engag'd in this Work : what Service is more honourable than the being employ'd in beating down the Devil's Kingdom, in lifting up the Name of God, in promoting the Peace, Welfare and Happiness of your Country, and in doing the most beneficial kindness to your Neighbour ?

Indeed

Indeed hereby we incur the anger and reproach of those we have to deal with, but this is little to be regarded by us. And if we are calumniated for doing of good, we ought not to be discourag'd thereby, but esteem it our honour that God hath thought us *worthy to suffer for his sake.*

This is to be like our blessed Lord, who was grievously reviled and mocked, even by those very Sinners he came to reform and save. Yet he went on in his merciful design, tho at last it cost him his Life, and the warm Blood of his Heart. This is to be like the holy Apostles and Martyrs, *who had trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments:* Yet they persisted in their endeavours to amend the World. And indeed who should be asham'd to be engaged in such a Cause as this, or afraid to die for it, since it is worth losing a mortal Life, if it be to save but one immortal Soul?

It may afford great comfort to us, to think that all our present shame will redound to our future glory, that every reproach and calumny we suffer will
but

Reformation of Manners. 59

but add to the lustre and brightness of our Crown. *For these light afflictions, saith the Apostle, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* Who then should fly back from such a work? fly back! nay who should not strive and be ambitious to appear in it? and herein be as forward to suppress mens sins, as they are greedy in committing 'em?

3dly. Consider the advantageous opportunity God hath put into your hands for the furthering your designs: we have a good KING, the brightest Ornament we have ever seen in the *English* Throne, who as he hath studied, and ventured his Life to procure our *Peace* and *Quiet*, so he hath not been wanting in his care that under his Government we may *live in all Godliness and Honesty*. How often hath he express'd his desires of a Reformation? and by his Speeches to both Houses of Parliament, and issuing out his Proclamations, hath done his part to endeavour it? And shall the KING *cry for Justice*, and will not the People too? Would the King have us reform'd, and shall we hate to be reform'd?

Again,

Again, you have many of the NOBILITY and JUDGES of the Land, who in their Letter prefix to a Book intituled, *An Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners*, and worthy to be recommended, “ have publicly applauded the Design, and the Methods propos’d for the accomplishing of it; adding their most humble and hearty Prayer, *That Pious men of all Ranks and Qualities, may be excited by this good Book to contribute their best endeavors toward a national Reformation of Manners.*

Besides, our REPRESENTATIVES in Parliament have taken care there should not be wanting good Laws to discourage Prophaneness and Immorality, and have made it their humble Address to the King that he would issue out his Proclamation commanding all his Majesty’s Judges, Justices of the Peace, and other Magistrates, to put in speedy execution those good Laws that are now in force against those Vices, which was accordingly done.

And lastly, you have many good *Magistrates* that hold up the Sword ready to smite, and only want your bringing Offenders

Reformation of Manners. 61

Offenders to Justice. You especially of this *City* are honour'd with this Blessing. The **CHIEF MAGISTRATE**, like an Illustrious Head, communicates Life and Vigour to the Body Politick. On these occasions he countenances *you* (my Brethren of the Church of *England*) with his presence in your Assemblies, and all of us with his Power; and may he with the rest of his Brethren continue to do so. May he carry the Sword triumphantly through this *City*, driving Sinners before him, who are timorous enough when Justice looks them in the face. May he entail a lasting honour upon himself by thus honouring of God; and finally, may he thus set a truly great Example to those that shall succeed him.

And now being favoured with so fair a juncture and opportunity, having all this to countenance you, a good King, good Laws, good Magistrates, and good men of all Ranks and Qualities to own you, how should this inspire you with Zeal, and embolden you in your Work? And how much of guilt will lie at their door who act in a private capacity, if a Reformation of Manners be
not

not vigorously carried on ! Stir up yourselves therefore , and be of *good Courage, and the Lord of Hosts will be with you.*

4ly. And lastly, consider the success you have hitherto had, and let that encourage you. You have met with many difficulties, but have surmounted them. You have begun the work, and that was the greatest difficulty of all ; don't faint therefore, but go on. Some have been reform'd by you, and bless God heartily for it, and more have been restrain'd. I hear your Societies increase, and are strengthened ; may they do so still. This will put Sinners out of heart. They begin to give ground ; do you not only maintain yours, but pursue them.

And *thus*, if out of a conviction of your duty, and an aim at the glory of God , joining a pity to Sinners with your punishing of 'em, and praying God to bless those Punishments to them, you vigorously prosecute your charitable and noble Undertaking, you will do abundance of good , you will at least drive Sin into corners ; and tho men should not cease to commit it, you will
no

Reformation of Manners. 63

no longer behold it ; and if you cannot remove guilt from their Persons, you will from the Nation. You will avert the heavy Judgments of God , and draw down a Blessing upon your selves, your Families, the Land ; and when you have done your work, and your life is ended, Men will have reason to say as they are following you to your grave, we accompany the Corps of one, *who while he liv'd was a Reformer of this World, and is now gon to live in a better.* But how short is this of that Commendation which your departed Spirits shall have, when introduc'd into the presence of your glorified Master, whose Interest you have industriously promoted, and who thereupon will openly acknowledg and abundantly reward it by saying, *Well done good and faithful Servant, enter into the Joy of your Lord.* Amen.

F I N I S.

